FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin
Author Guidelines

Beginning in 1932 as a list of national fugitives, the *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* has grown into a magazine reaching approximately 200,000 readers every month in over 100 countries worldwide. Over 45,000 copies of the *Bulletin* are printed each month, compared with the 5,000 when the publication first appeared.

Complimentary copies of the *Bulletin* are limited to FBI National Academy graduates currently employed by law enforcement agencies; U.S. attorneys; U.S. senators and representatives; judges; retired FBI special agents; libraries; and heads of law enforcement agencies, law enforcement training academies, and university criminal justice departments. However, current and some back issues of the magazine, as well as subscription information are available on the FBI's Internet site at **http://www.fbi.gov** under the Library and Reference section.

GETTING PUBLISHED

The *Bulletin* seeks articles on a variety of topics of interest to the criminal justice community. For example, administrative issues, crime problems and solutions, ethics, investigative techniques, leadership and management concerns, personnel and training matters, and police-community relations represent a few of the topics that the *Bulletin* addresses. To cover the widest spectrum of subjects, the *Bulletin* generally does not publish articles on similar topics within a 12-month period or accept articles previously published or currently under consideration by other magazines. Finally, because it is a government publication, the *Bulletin* cannot accept articles that advertise a product or service.

The *Bulletin* judges articles on relevance to the audience, factual accuracy, analysis of the information, structure and logical flow, style and ease of reading, and length. The editorial staff edits all manuscripts for length, clarity, format, and style.

Relevance to the Audience

Although the *Bulletin* is an official publication of the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice, its mission is to provide a forum for exchanging information throughout the criminal justice community. Mid-level to executive managers in diverse agencies, not only within the United States but also from many foreign countries, make up the majority of the *Bulletin*'s readers and represent a wide range of English language comprehension and reading abilities. While some of these administrators work in large departments serving metropolitan areas, most serve in smaller agencies. In fact, the majority of the law enforcement agencies in the United States field fewer than 10 full-time officers.[1] Authors also should realize that most readers have a limited amount of time to devote to reading articles, regardless of their level of interest. Therefore, authors always should consider the *Bulletin*'s readers and present their material in clear, concise, and understandable terms. To this end, authors should keep these questions firmly in mind when preparing their articles.

- Are my readers familiar with my organization or profession?
- How much do my readers know about my topic?
- Will my readers think this information is important?
- What do I want my readers to learn from or do with this information?
- What can I do to make my article easy for my readers to understand?

To ensure that their articles apply to the

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[1] Brian A. Reaves and Andrew L. Goldberg, *Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies, 1996* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 1998), 4, NCJ-164618; available from http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/ascil/ csllea96.txt; accessed July 8, 1999.

widest scope of the *Bulletin*'s readership, authors should write with an appropriate tone. For example, they should not talk down to their readers, write over their heads, or use inappropriate humor. Also, authors should use bias-free language—eliminate the generic "he"; avoid such terms as *manpower* or *man the phones*; put people before conditions, e.g., use *offender with paranoid schizophrenia,* not *paranoid schizophrenic*; and watch for sensitive phrases, for example, use *Asian,* not *oriental; developing country,* not *third-world nation*. Finally, authors should avoid clichés, not only the obvious but other not-so-apparent phrases, such as *in the wake of*, *build a bridge to the 21st century*, or *do more with less*.

Factual Accuracy

Authors should support their articles with accurate, concise, and appropriate details. Often, authors know their subject matter from experience, observation, and reflection; what their articles lack are the supporting facts. Authors should provide their readers with sufficient background information, detailed explanations, and specific examples that illustrate and support their topics. Also, authors should limit jargon (technical or specialized language used among members of a particular group) and provide in-text explanations for any terms that readers might find unfamiliar or confusing. At the same time, authors should tailor their work to meet the editorial style and format of the *Bulletin*. For example, authors should revise research papers, reports, and studies to appeal to the magazine's broad readership.

Authors always should cite the sources they use for these supporting facts. Quoting a source exactly, citing or paraphrasing another individual's work or ideas, and referring to information that generally is not well known require appropriate documentation. Unlike newspapers and other commercial publications that regularly quote experts, the *Bulletin* prefers to paraphrase speakers, usually without naming them directly, then give credit to these individuals in a footnote.

Analysis of the Information

Along with supplying supporting facts, authors should analyze the information they provide and make appropriate recommendations for its use. Authors should indicate why this information is important to their readers, and how it will benefit them. For example, an article on a new shift schedule could include potential benefits, such as cost savings and improved morale. Also, authors should examine their articles for any missing material or confusing elements and provide the necessary clarification. The *Bulletin* recommends that authors have a subject-matter expert, a grammarian, and someone unfamiliar with the topic read their articles to determine if any unanswered questions remain. Authors also should try reading their articles out loud to help uncover problem areas.

Structure and Logical Flow

Articles on worthwhile topics but without organization or a unifying theme generally do not receive favorable consideration. Often, these problems stem from the same source—the writer has not developed a central thesis to guide the presentation. To determine a central thesis, authors should answer four questions: *Why am I writing this? Who are my readers? What do I want my readers to do?* and *Why should my readers care about this?* Answering these questions helps authors focus their thoughts, decide how much information they will need, and tailor their documents to their readers' needs. In turn, these answers will lead authors to their main point or central thesis.

Once they have determined the central thesis, authors should study several issues of the *Bulletin* to understand how the magazine presents various topics and structures different types of articles. By doing this, authors will learn that they should begin their articles with an intriguing scenario, interesting statistic, fascinating fact, quotable quote, or some other attention-getting

device. Next, they should develop the introduction by explaining the problem or issue to their readers before presenting the solution in the thesis. Authors should indicate what the article is going to say, why this material is important to the readers, and how it will benefit them. Authors should not state what the article is *about* but what they intend to *say* about the topic. For example, this sentence—*This article describes the experiences of the Laketown Police Department in developing police-oriented cable access programming*—indicates the topic of the article but little else. However, this approach—*By developing programming for the local cable access channel, the Laketown Police Department found a way to deliver a wide range of public safety and police-oriented information to a broad cross section of the communit*y—presents a far more powerful and helpful preview of the overall message of the article.

Authors should construct their articles logically. Various strategies exist, such as chronological order or general-to-specific format. If authors think their readers will be receptive to their topics, they may want to start with a general thesis and back it up with specific facts. However, if readers might resist the subject, authors may want to begin by citing specific evidence before revealing their general arguments.

After determining the structure, authors should make sure that their articles are balanced. They should not devote too much time to one area at the expense of another. Also, authors should cover opposing points of view, especially for controversial topics.

Finally, authors should end their articles with a strong, carefully planned conclusion. It should wrap up the article without introducing any new information, restate the article's main points, give the readers a sense of completion, and leave a lasting impression.

Style and Ease of Reading

Because the *Bulletin* reaches a wide audience, authors should maintain a straightforward, direct writing style. They should use concise language to explain even complex ideas or concepts and avoid unnecessary words. Instead of writing—*In order to develop an effective response strategy...*—authors should write—*To respond effectively....* Likewise, authors should use action verbs, limit forms of the verb "to be," and use concrete language. For example, *Citizens were appreciative of the department's efforts in modernizing its dispatching capabilities*—reads much better as—*Citizens appreciated the department's new dispatching capabilities*. Also, authors should heed this advice: "In promulgating your esoteric cogitations, or articulating your superficial sentimentalities and amicable, philosophical, or psychological observations, beware of platitudinous ponderosity.... Eschew all conglomerations of flatulent garrulity, jejune babblement, and asinine affectations...."[2] Translation—authors should use simple language that their readers can understand.

Because the *Bulletin* reaches a broad readership representing diverse components of the criminal justice system, it prefers to publish articles in the third person using active voice. Third person presents information to a neutral audience from a neutral vantage point—*The evening shift commander organized a Neighborhood Watch meeting*. Second person addresses the audience as *you*, either stated—*You do not need to be an accountant to become a good white-collar crime investigator*—or implied—*After a critical incident, be prepared to respond to media requests for information*. First person relates information from a personal vantage point—*I conducted a study on the department's new shift schedule*.

[2] Grenville Kleiser, *Humorous Hits and How to Hold an Audience; A Collection of Short Selections, Stories, and Sketches for All Occasions* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1971), 163-164.

Active voice conveys information in a direct and powerful way and avoids misunderstandings. In active voice, the sentence—*Transit police administrators developed contingency plans for responding to biochemical assaults on mass transit systems*—clearly shows who did what. However, in passive voice—*Contingency plans were developed for responding to biochemical assaults on mass transit systems*—the subject (*contingency plans*) is being acted upon by an unknown force. Using active voice clarifies the information.

To further enhance readability, authors should avoid long sentences and paragraphs. Effective sentences generally should contain fewer than 30 words and run no more than 2 lines. Authors should keep paragraphs fairly short but vary their length to maintain their readers' attention. Authors also need to link paragraphs together to help their readers follow the flow of the article. Unrelated ideas interrupt and confuse readers. Therefore, authors should use transitional words and phrases to guide their readers through the paragraphs and make the relationship between ideas clear.

Finally, authors should use headings to break several paragraphs into logical sections and guide readers through the main points of their articles. Authors should create headings that are brief, informative, relevant, and parallel (i.e., use the same parts of speech). An article on implementing an outside employment policy, for instance, might include such headings as *Identifying a Need, Researching Model Approaches, Organizing Focus Groups, Developing Guidelines, Implementing the Policy,* and *Measuring Results*.

Length and Format

Feature articles should contain 2,000 to 3,500 words or about 8 to 14 pages, double-spaced. Submissions for specialized departments, such as Police Practice and Case Study, should contain 1,200 to 2,000 words or 5 to 8 pages, double-spaced.

Authors should submit three copies of their articles typed and double-spaced on 8 ½- by 11-inch white paper with all pages numbered. When possible, an electronic version of the article saved on computer disk should accompany the typed manuscript.

For proper footnote citation format, authors should refer to *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed., by Kate L. Turabian. For grammar and style issues, authors should follow *The New York Public Library Writer's Guide to Style and Usage*.

SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS

Authors may submit a query letter along with a detailed 1- to 2-page outline before writing an article. Although designed to help authors, this process does not guarantee acceptance of any article. Authors also may submit completed manuscripts and will receive notification of the receipt of the material. The *Bulletin* staff will review queries and articles and advise the authors of acceptance or rejection.

Authors should submit a full-face, passport-style photograph of themselves to be used with feature articles and some specialized departments. Authors also can submit photographs that visually depict their subject matter. The *Bulletin* can use black-and-white glossy or color prints or slides, although 5x7 or 8x10 prints are preferred. Authors should send duplicate, not original, prints because the magazine does not accept responsibility for prints that are damaged or lost. Upon publication, authors receive two complimentary copies of the issue in which their article appears.

Authors should mail query letters or manuscript submissions to—Editor, *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, FBI Academy, Madison Building, Room 209, Quantico, Virginia 22135; telephone: 703-632-1952; fax: 703-632-1968; e-mail: leb@fbiacademy.edu.